March Comes in Like a Lion

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Chapter. 34

Silver Thread

THE 20TH
SHISHI-OU CHAMPIONSHIP
SPONSORED BY HAKUSEN NEWSPAPER
SOUYA TOUJI SHISHI-OU VS SHIMADA KAI 8TH-DAN
HEY!
KIRI-YAMA!
NIKAI-DOU.
SFX: TETETE... (STEP STEP STEP...)
I...
I GUESS THIS IS THE RIGHT PLACE. What a big hotel.
SFX: KYODO KYODO... (GLANCE GLANCE...)
Nervous 17-year-old
THE GAMES DON'T EVEN START UNTIL TOMORROW. I FEEL BAD FOR ANIJA AND THEM.
THIS IS THE 20TH ONE, SO TO COMMEMORATE IT THERE'S A "FAN GATHERING" BEFORE THE PRE-CHAMPION-SHIP EVENT.
ANIJA IS IN THE WAITING ROOM DOING INTER-VIEWS RIGHT NOW.

Plus I'm his little brother disciple, ya know?!
C'mon!
NOTHING TO DO WITH IT?!
WE'RE IN THE SAME STUDY GROUP, AREN'T WE?!
WE'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS. TO STAY WITH HIM...
SAY, ARE YOU SURE THAT'S OKAY?
THE "FAN GATHERING" STARTS AT 3.
ONCE IT STARTS, LET'S TRY TO STAY WITH ANIJA AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.
HE'S GOING TO BE SURROUNDED BY MANY STRANGERS.
I WANT TO BE NEXT TO HIM SO THAT HE DOESN'T STRAIN HIS NERVES AND GET WORN OUT THE DAY BEFORE THE MATCH.
IF HE HAS A "FAMILIAR FACE" NEARBY, HE'LL BE MORE RELAXED, RIGHT?
ANIJA IS SOMEONE WHO IS MORE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER PEOPLE THAN MOST...
.....
WHAT?
AH,
NO...
NO-THING AT ALL.
Nikaidou... could it be possible that you're more mature than I am?
GOT IT.
?
DIDN'T THINK OF THAT.

BESIDES,
AT LEAST SOAK UP THE ATMOSPHERE.
YOU'D BETTER GET USED TO IT!
COME NOW, TAKE THIS MOMENT TO SOAR,
AND LET US HAVE NO LAPSE OF CONCENTRATION!
"Come now"?
FOR WHEN WE EVENTUALLY APPEAR IN THE TITLE MATCH. DUH.
HUUUH?!
YOU REALLY CAME OUT WITH THAT QUICK!! LIKE IT'S JUST A MATTER OF COURSE?!
We're still C1 and C2 right now, you know?!
PLAINLY
WE WILL.
WE'LL DEFINITELY MAKE A BID FOR THE TITLE.
THAT'S A CERTAINTY.

–Looking at Nikaidou's face as he said that,

I was quite shaken.

–While I was wandering around in circles,

he, someone my own age, was already
strengthening his resolve.
WHEN I SAW YOU,
I FELT I HAD TO SAY SOME-THING.
YOUR TOURNAMENT WINNINGS AND PLAYING FEES...
BESIDES WHAT YOU NEED FOR LIVING EXPENSES, PRETTY MUCH ALL OF IT
IS DEPOSITED TO US, THE KOUDA FAMILY, RIGHT?
KNOWING YOU, YOU MUST BE THINKING, "IT'S FOR ALL THE HELP YOU'VE GIVEN ME", BUT...
YOU KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE TO THINK THAT WAY, RIGHT?
—BUT, I CAN'T...

It's okay, ain't it, Kouda? For him to just keep giving it to you to hold on to?
I mean, a kid with a large amount of money won't use it for anything good.
REI ISN'T THAT SORT OF BOY.
GYAH
!!
PRESI-DENT.
IS THAT RIGHT? AND NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, FOR A KID HIS AGE,
FORGET WHAT HE'S USING IT FOR, HE DOESN'T EVEN HAVE A WAY OF USING ALL THIS MONEY YET, DOES HE?!
LIQUOR
GAM-BLING
UN-SEXLY SHOPS
CIGA-RETTES
ALL NO GO!!

SFX: GUIHH (GRAAAB) SFX: DONNN (SLAMMM)

Poor kid. Finally making a bit of cash,
and you've got no way of using it!
I guess all that's left is women?! You could give it to a selfish woman to support her, or something like that?!
How about it?! Using it like that, eh? Kiriyama-kyuuun!!
Why you little...
AUH
That hurts.
PRESIDENT, THAT'S ENOUGH.
PLEASE LEAVE US ALONE FOR A MINUTE.

SFX: GURI GURI (NOOGIE NOOGIE)

Huh...? What does he mean...?
SHE SEEMS TO BE GOING TO YOUR PLACE A LOT.
IS SHE BOTHERING YOU?
THAT REMINDS ME.
HOW IS KYOUKO?
SHE HASN'T BEEN?
IT'S TRUE THEN.
I REALLY DON'T KNOW
WHAT SHE'S THINKING ANYMORE AT ALL...
EXCUSE ME, KOUDA 8TH-DAN, KIRIYAMA 5TH-DAN. WOULD YOU MIND TAKING A PICTURE?
KYOUKO IS...
FATHER ...

–But if he finds out about it, Father will...
What would happen to Kyouko?
–What do I do?
Should I say something?
I guess there's really nothing I can do right now.
SFX: SAWA SAWA... (WHOOSH WHOOSH...)
WHAT AN AMAZING GARDEN...
I CAN'T BELIEVE THERE'S A PLACE LIKE THIS
IN A METRO-POLITAN HOTEL...

SFX: SAAAA
The meeting's about to start, and the star is out here.
HEY, KIRIYAMA!
We can't have that now, can we?! Geez.
IF YOU WERE WITH HIM, WHY DIDN'T YOU BRING HIM INSIDE?
Yes...
Sorry.
C'MON, LET'S GO!
YOU, TOO! COME!
I mean...
That took my breath away...
He had no presence at all.

The moment I saw him,
IT'S LIKE TIME HAS STOPPED FOR HIM.
HIS APPEARANCE NEVER CHANGES.
all the sound disappeared from the world.
"This is not a person."
Deep in my memory, I heard someone whisper that.

The moment he disappeared,
the sky broke apart,
and a heavy rain poured down.
SFX: ZAAAAAAAAA (FWSSSSHHHHHHH)
Are you really going to fight that man,
Shimada-san...?
Chapter 34 END

Senzaki Manabu's Lion Shogi Column
AN ARTICLE BY SENZAKI MANABU
1

TITLE MATCH BATTLES ACROSS THE NATION ☆

"Shishi-Ou Championship" (Lion King Championship) is a good name, isn't it? There are lots of title matches in shogi with names in kanji like the Meijin Championship (Master), the Ryuu-Ou Championship (Dragon King), and the Kisei Championship (Great Player), and there really aren't any written in Western writing.

Now then, title matches are the finals of a competition which are the flowers of the shogi world. The way the game is handled is incomparable to the battles up to that point which decide the challenger. They're upgraded from a shogi hall in Sendagaya built 30-something years earlier to a first-class hotel and or a traditional Japanese hotel.

To give you a model for the place where the first game of the Shishi-Ou Championship is held would be the bustling Mejiro, Tokyo hotel, "Chinzanso", I suppose. It's a high-class hotel said to be one of the new big three, and here is where for the past two years the Meijin Championship's first game has been held.

Not all title matches are played in Tokyo. No, actually it's rare for them to take place in Tokyo. They actually take place all over the country. It would seem that the reason for this is partially because the sponsors are newspapers and they want to increase sales. Sometimes they even take place overseas. They've been held in Paris, London, New York, and other big cities all over the world. Recently they've been in China a lot as well. And as a rare occurrence inside the country, they have occurred in Toudai Temple and Mt. Hiei Enryaku Temple as well.

At the title matches, there are not only shogi players, but also the people who set up the match, players from the Japan Shogi Association, staff, and sponsors. There are also dozens of journalists covering the match, so a lot of people have to be transported for these events. Furthermore, in the Meijin Championship and the Ryuu-ou Championship, they're broadcast live on NHK, so the TV station's staff (there are a lot of them) come as well. Because of this, and because it's so hard to get everyone together, they frequently call shogi fans and celebrities and such that are nearby and put on a magnificent pre-championship event. With all that setup, and considering the special circumstances surrounding a shogi game, as you might expect there are many staple hotels that are quite used to it.

Also, many competitions end with one side winning overwhelmingly. And when that happens, events beyond that point get cancelled. It is quite harsh for those who had agreed to the arrangement. Therefore, there are many staple hotels chosen for the latter half of the competitions, and one of them is "Jinya" in Kanegawa Prefecture. In exchange for the ever-present risk of cancellation, it's always in a serious state when the title matches come, so Jinya gets a lot of famous matches played there.